

ODP 0-237
28 FEB 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Training

FROM: Bruce T. Johnson
Director of Data Processing

SUBJECT: Sign Language Training

Don:

1. One of our employees came up with a suggestion for OTR-sponsored sign language training, which I had hoped to bring up at your Training Conference on 15 February. Unfortunately, the opportunity did not present itself. Therefore, I am passing it along here for your consideration. I believe it has merit.

2. As you know, ODP has been one of the Agency's pioneers in employing people with hearing impairments. When we began to integrate these employees into our work force, their co-workers and supervisors recognized the communication barrier that existed. Many of them took the initiative to enroll in after hours sign language training at their own expense, or to participate in informal self-study programs. The payoff in improved productivity has been significant--so significant in one case, that [REDACTED] STATINTL [REDACTED] was awarded a Special Achievement Award for her initiative in developing a sign language skill to facilitate the integration of two deaf programmers into her Division.

3. But, with the growing number of Agency employees who are called upon to interact with employees with hearing handicaps, informal training is no longer adequate to meet the need for sign language training. Therefore, I suggest that OTR investigate the feasibility of instituting an Agency sponsored in-house sign language training program. Some of our employees have discovered that several colleges in the area offer excellent sign language programs, and these colleges, notably Gallaudet and Northern Virginia Community College, have indicated informally that they are willing to conduct off-campus programs. In addition, the instructors for these programs have pointed out to their students that there is more involved in communicating with deaf people than learning sign language. They emphasize

the difference in cultural backgrounds and value systems that separate employees with hearing from those without. Bridging this separation, they believe, is often critical to successful integration of deaf employees into the work environment, especially for supervisors. Gallaudet offers training aimed specifically at helping supervisors and co-workers overcome this barrier.

4. I realize that there are many problems and costs associated with instituting an Agency sign language program and that OTR has a heavy workload already. But the current renewed emphasis on personnel development and the potential benefits accruing from improved communication and management of our hearing impaired employees seem to warrant bringing this training in-house. My people, especially [REDACTED] the officer who brought this suggestion to my attention, are prepared to help in any way they can. Your staff may contact my Executive Officer, [REDACTED], ext. 4011, to pursue this suggestion further.

STATINTL

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/s/ Bruce T. Johnson

Bruce T. Johnson

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O/D/ODP, [REDACTED] ee/2-28-80

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